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## Final Report on Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Determinations

Prepared by the Dillon Field Office  
for the Dillon Resource Management Plan

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The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for the stewardship of our public lands. It is committed to manage, protect, and improve these lands in a manner to serve the needs of the American people for all times. Management is based on the principles of multiple use and sustained yield of our nation's resources within a framework of environmental responsibility and scientific technology. These resources include recreation; rangelands; timber; minerals; watershed; fish and wildlife; wilderness; air; and scenic, scientific, and cultural values.

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## BACKGROUND

The Montana Bureau of Land Management's Dillon Field Office (BLM) released the Draft Wild and Scenic Rivers Eligibility Report in March 2002 for public comment and review (BLM 2002). The Draft report recommended 10 rivers or river segments as eligible for further study based on the presence of at least one (1) outstandingly remarkable value and a free flowing nature. Each river or river segment proposed as eligible was given a tentative classification of wild, scenic, or recreational based on the level of development and human intrusion present along each river corridor. A number of other rivers were dismissed from further study based on determinations that they either were not free flowing or did not contain at least one outstandingly remarkable value.

The report also provided information about the Wild and Scenic River review process and the kinds of criteria to be considered in the next phase known as the suitability study. The suitability study is conducted as a component of the broader Resource Management Plan (RMP) being prepared for lands in Beaverhead and Madison Counties that are administered by the BLM's Dillon Field Office.

BLM requested to receive public comments by April 30, 2002, in order to move forward with the review process. BLM considered these comments and made changes as warranted. This report documents the final eligibility determinations for rivers or river segments that will be studied further in the planning process.

## OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC COMMENT

The BLM received 37 written responses, which contained a variety of comments. Some letters were signed by several separate entities. Each letter was read and comments relating to eligibility determinations were considered in relation to the recommendations in the Draft Eligibility Report. This report provides general discussion on the comments received and how they were addressed. Comments related to suitability issues and identification of impacts will be used as the BLM moves forward in the next step of the Wild and Scenic River review.

### Comments Specific to One of the Ten Rivers or River Segments

Comments regarding specific rivers or river segments were considered and where necessary, additional information was collected to make a final determination on whether the river met the eligibility criteria. This included re-evaluating the free flow characteristics and the values identified as outstanding. In some cases, additional field work was conducted in order to better assess the comments; other comments were addressed by reviewing guidance and seeking assistance from Wild and Scenic River staff experts.



### **Comments on Eligibility in General**

Comments were received in support of and against some or all of the eligibility recommendations contained in the Draft Eligibility Report. Suggestions were made that additional rivers needed to be considered eligible and other suggestions were that some rivers recommended as eligible did not meet the eligibility criteria. It was suggested that all rivers with historic arctic grayling habitat should be eligible and that travel should be restricted on genetically pure westslope cutthroat rivers. These changes would make those values outstandingly remarkable and those rivers would be eligible. It was also recommended that all river segments in Wilderness Study Areas and roadless areas should be considered eligible as wild rivers. Other comments indicated that BLM had not assessed Dyce Creek, Black Canyon, and the North and South Forks of Everson Creek.

Rivers in the Dillon Field Office were evaluated against the following eligibility criteria:

- 1) whether the river was free flowing, and
- 2) whether BLM-administered land within the river corridor contained at least one river-related value meeting the criteria of outstandingly remarkable.

The Dillon Field Office took a comprehensive approach in this review. Dyce Creek, Black Canyon, and the North and South Fork of Everson Creek were reviewed and included in the list of 52

rivers identified in the initial screening process. BLM found the values present along these rivers did not meet the eligibility criteria and thus they did not move forward in the process. In addition, direction provided that values that met the outstandingly remarkable criteria have to be present at the time of evaluation. Therefore, the potential for fish to be reintroduced into a historic habitat or a potential change in travel management in order to meet the eligibility criteria is not a consideration in the Wild and Scenic River eligibility review.

### **Comments on Free Flow**

Many comments suggested that rivers with numerous irrigation diversions, rip rap, other modifications, and/or alteration of the natural hydrograph should not be considered free flowing. In addition, some comments suggested rivers that are intermittent, not navigable, and those that freeze over should not be considered free flowing.

While the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act provides a definition of free flowing as "existing or flowing in a natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, rip-rapping, or other modification of the waterway," the law also goes on to state that "existence of small dams, diversion works, or other minor structures shall not automatically disqualify it for consideration." Page 14 of the Draft Eligibility Report provided further discussion on the definition of free flowing in relation to the Wild and Scenic River review. Many of the comments focused on the number and extent of irrigation diversions on the various rivers. The eligible rivers were reevaluated to



determine if the nature and extent of the modifications in each river were of a magnitude to change the finding of free flowing. The irrigation systems observed along the river and on maps showed flows usually returning to the river after the water right is utilized. Field review showed rivers “riverine” in appearance and even in areas of rip rap, one bank is often free to flow unhindered. The free flow definition does not require a river to be perennial or to be navigable, nor does it require a natural flow without dams located above or below eligible river segments. Based on this information, no changes in free flowing determinations were warranted based on the definition in the Act and guidance directing the free flow assessment.

While none of the free flowing assessments changed, some rivers were resegmented based on information provided in the comments, and tentative classifications were reviewed to ensure development and access along the river or river segments was considered. Resegmentation is discussed under the following sections that document changes made to each river or river segment.

### **Comments on Outstandingly Remarkable Values**

Many comments proposed that the values identified as outstandingly remarkable may be “significant and important” when judged on a local scale, but are not “outstandingly remarkable” when judged on a regional or national scale. Other comments questioned whether values were truly river related or whether they were located on BLM lands within the study corridor. Comments stated that

consideration of cultural values not in the public record creates an appearance that the BLM is designating an area for outstandingly remarkable values that are in effect “secret.” It was suggested that our criteria for considering westslope cutthroat trout as an outstandingly remarkable value should be changed so that population values would override habitat values. It was also suggested that any river that was not in “proper functioning condition” as assessed by BLM would not meet the criteria as outstandingly remarkable.

BLM did not change the criteria it used when determining whether or not values were outstandingly remarkable. Each value identified in the Draft Eligibility Report was reviewed to ensure it occurred on BLM lands in the study corridor and that justification was available that indicated the value met the criteria specified in Appendix A of the Draft report. The location of cultural resources is protected from public disclosure under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, as amended (ARPA). Every attempt was made in the Draft Eligibility Report to describe the cultural and historic resources located on BLM land without disclosing the location of values not readily apparent. BLM is not free to do otherwise, therefore no changes were made in the amount of information disclosed by BLM in regard to cultural or historic resources. Finally, if the value was not directly related to the “proper functioning condition” of the river, it was not considered as a single factor that would prevent a river from being eligible.



### **Comments on Tentative Classification**

Many public comments confused the tentative classification of the river with the values that were identified along the river corridor. Classification of a river is related to the level of development that exists along the river corridor (see page 1 and Appendix B of the Draft Eligibility Report). There are three classifications—Wild, Scenic and Recreational. These classifications are NOT RELATED to the type of values that the river may contain (i.e., recreation value). Since “most of the rivers have intrusions of human development and activities”, most of the rivers were classified as Recreational rather than Wild or Scenic. It was also suggested that it was premature to assign tentative classification until there is a plan in place for water quality improvements in accordance with MCA 75-5-702 and MCA 75-5-703 (Montana Code Annotated) and the Clean Water Act .

An impaired stream cannot be classified as Wild. However, the classification criteria specifies that rivers will not be precluded from scenic and recreational classification because of poor water quality at the time of their study, provided a water quality improvement plan exists or is being developed in compliance with applicable federal and state laws. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has established a schedule to prepare water quality restoration plans on all impaired water bodies by 2007. Based on the intent to develop these plans, rivers were not excluded from being eligible just because they are listed as impaired.

### **Comments on Boundary Identification**

Concerns were expressed on the boundaries established for the Wild and Scenic River review, and on the delineation of the Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM). The public identified four different types of Wild and Scenic River boundaries and asked when maps delineating all these boundaries would be available for review. There was concern that the river segments and boundaries included private land.

The preliminary study boundary established for the eligibility review is not a designation boundary. The boundaries delineated for the eligibility review are generally one quarter mile from the OHWM on either side of the river. The Wild and Scenic River Act does not provide a definition of OHWM, thus the definition as specified under Montana statute is acceptable. However, since the specific location of the OHWM is difficult to delineate, the preliminary boundaries and study area considered in the eligibility review included land ¼ mile on either side of the river. Maps were included with the Draft Eligibility Report, but only BLM lands in the river segment were highlighted. This caused confusion, but was done because only BLM lands were evaluated in the eligibility assessment.

Table 1 at the end of this document more specifically describes the beginning and end of each river or river segment by legal description, and gives the distance on BLM lands in comparison to the distance of the entire segment. Even though the river segment contains private



or other lands between the beginning and end points of the segment, only BLM lands were considered in the assessment. The section on *Comments Regarding Management of Eligible Rivers* also states that private land is not affected by a finding of eligibility. Maps of each eligible river or river segment are included at the back of this report. Topographic maps at the 1:24,000 scale can be viewed by making an appointment with Lynn Anderson at the Dillon Field Office. However, these boundaries remain study boundaries; only after designation of a Wild and Scenic River are final management boundaries established. If a river is designated, the managing agency has one year, unless otherwise provided for, to prepare detailed boundaries. Notice of the availability of boundaries is then published in the Federal Register. Boundaries are not effective until ninety days after they have been forwarded to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

### **Comments on Water Quality**

Questions were raised regarding water quality considerations in the eligibility review. One comment suggested that most if not all of the water bodies considered eligible are on the Montana Department of Environmental Quality's list of impaired water bodies prepared under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act and do not meet the water quality criteria necessary to be considered eligible under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Another comment stated that it was premature to assign tentative classification until there is a plan in place

for water quality improvements in accordance with MCA 75-5-702 and MCA 75-5-703 and the Clean Water Act.

The BLM did not originally consider the 303(d) list in preparation of the Draft Eligibility report and reconsidered water quality on each of the rivers. An impaired stream cannot be classified as Wild but could be classified as Scenic or Recreational. The classification criteria specifies that rivers will not be precluded from scenic and recreational classification because of poor water quality at the time of their study, provided a water quality improvement plan exists or is being developed in compliance with applicable federal and state laws. Montana DEQ has established a schedule to prepare water quality improvement plans on all impaired water bodies by 2007.

In addition, comments suggested that impaired water quality would not allow for outstandingly remarkable fish values if a river only partially supported fish or aquatic habitats. BLM assessed each river on a case-by-case basis. For instance, even with impaired water quality on the Beaverhead River, the brown trout fishery is one of the most productive in Montana and meets the criteria to be an outstandingly remarkable fish value.

### **Comments Related to Suitability Criteria**

Many of the comments received asked questions and raised concerns that will be addressed when the suitability study is completed. Page 4 of the Draft Eligibility Report identified some of the criteria that are considered in the suitability study.



Comments asking us to consider items that are reviewed in the suitability assessment are outside the scope of the eligibility review. However, all comments related to suitability will be considered as that study is completed and the Draft RMP/EIS is developed.

### **Comments Related to Impacts of Designation**

A number of public comments indicated that BLM had not considered the impact a designation would have on current uses, economics of the area, and a variety of other considerations. The Draft Eligibility Report did not include an impact analysis as it does not result in any designation. An impact analysis will be conducted on alternatives developed for the RMP, which will include alternatives on whether or not eligible rivers should be considered suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system. While these types of comments are outside the scope of the eligibility review, they will be considered when the Draft RMP/EIS is written.

### **Comments Related to Management of Eligible Rivers**

Concerns were expressed that eligibility will result in a river being managed as if it is already designated, and that declaring eligibility has the potential to tie up river corridors from active resource conservation practices and multiple resource uses. Some comments referred to specific sections of the Wild and

Scenic Rivers Act, pointing to sections restricting development, as well as to case studies that described management of designated rivers, or controversies surrounding management of designated rivers.

Eligible rivers identified for further study through agency planning processes are not protected under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Rather, protection of free flow, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values occurs through other BLM authorities. For an eligible river, there is no regulatory authority to manage private land and no ability to acquire interest in land. Actions of other local, state or federal agencies or private landowners are not affected by a determination of eligibility, though voluntary partnerships can assist the managing agency in protection of the values, free flow, and tentative classification.

Existing uses occurring at the time of the evaluation will continue on rivers determined eligible for further study. New uses or changes in use that require authorization by BLM will be assessed on a case-by-case basis in an environmental analysis to determine whether the identified values, the free flow, or the tentative classification would be degraded with authorization of a new or changed use. This was described in the Draft Eligibility Report on page 3 and in Appendix C.



## SUMMARY OF CHANGES

As a result of comment review, new information and reassessment of the eligibility criteria, the following changes were made:

- Bear Creek remains eligible but is tentatively classified as scenic rather than wild due to evidence of human intrusion and past logging activities.
- Beaverhead River has been resegmented but remains eligible.
- Big Hole River has been split into two separate segments, but adjustments have been made regarding the outstandingly remarkable values on each segment.
- Big Sheep Creek remains eligible; however, fish values are no longer considered outstandingly remarkable.
- Canyon Creek is no longer considered eligible. The geology values identified in the Draft report are not located on BLM lands.
- Jones Creek is no longer considered eligible because new information indicates it does not contain genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout.
- The three segments of the Madison River remain eligible. Adjustments have been made to some of the outstandingly

remarkable values previously identified for the Madison River–Cliff Lake to Varney Bridge segment. The classification on the segment–Powerhouse to N. Wilderness Boundary has been changed from Wild to Scenic. The N. Wilderness Boundary to Greycliff segment is unchanged.

- North Fork of Greenhorn/Dark Hollow Creek is no longer eligible.

Details of changes are discussed below by river or river segment.

### Changes to Bear Creek

The Draft Eligibility Report found Bear Creek free flowing with one outstandingly remarkable value–westslope cutthroat trout as a fish value. The river was tentatively classified as Wild. The criteria was met based on a genetically pure population in combination with habitat and shorelines that were both inaccessible and primitive in nature. BLM conducted an additional review of Bear Creek based on specific comments regarding the nature of the habitat along Bear Creek. Evidence of logging exists within the river corridor on BLM, including old roads, jeep trails, skid trails, and a timber structure bridging the river area. These intrusions are not affecting the habitat, but provide enough evidence of human activity and evidence of past timber harvest to change the tentative classification from Wild to Scenic. The river is still inaccessible by motorized means due to its location within the Centennial Mountains Wilderness Study



Area and the travel management already in place. Based on this assessment, the river remains eligible based on the combination of fish population and habitat, but the tentative classification is Scenic.

### **Changes to the Beaverhead River**

The Draft Eligibility Report found the Beaverhead River free flowing with recreation, fish and historic values considered outstandingly remarkable. The river was tentatively classified as Recreational. The river was resegmented after additional field review to take into account some of the development noted in the comments. The segment now begins at the interstate bridge at Pipe Organ Rock and ends where it leaves BLM land near the Dalys exit on Interstate 15. The river was still determined to be free flowing. While diversions, bridge structures, and modifications exist along the river, irrigation or wetland systems return any remaining flow to the river and at least one side of the river is usually free to ebb and flow and remains riverine in appearance. Since a free flow determination does not require a river to retain a natural hydrograph or be naturally flowing, the modulation of the river by the operations of Clark Canyon Dam and the delivery of contracted water to users did not result in a change to the free flow determination.

The values identified as outstandingly remarkable were also reassessed in light of public comment. Recreation, fish, and historic values continue to be considered outstandingly remarkable. Comments suggested that impaired water quality

would not allow for outstandingly remarkable fish values on the Beaverhead since the river only partially supports fish or aquatic habitats according to Montana Department of Environmental Quality assessment. However, even with impaired water quality, the brown trout fishery associated with the Beaverhead River is one of the most productive in Montana and meets the criteria for outstandingly remarkable. In fact, the habitat provided by the presence and operation of Clark Canyon Dam supports the fishery and provides for recreational fishing opportunities.

Comments also suggested the Ney Ranch was only of local significance. BLM agrees that there are many examples of homesteads and that homesteading was not a rare or unusual activity for this area. However, the Ney Ranch is located on public lands, which is unusual given that homesteading was an activity that resulted in the transfer of public land into private ownership. In addition, an archived record of artifacts and historical records exists for this particular site. The existence of the physical remains associated with an archived record gives this site regional significance. The Lewis and Clark Trail is associated with a significant event and persons important on a national scale, which meets the criteria established for an outstandingly remarkable historic value.

### **Changes to the Big Hole River**

The Draft Eligibility Report found the Big Hole River free flowing with recreation, scenic, fish, historic, and cultural values. The river was tentatively classified as



Recreational. The Big Hole River was resegmented based on physiographic differences and a change in river character. Two segments will go forward as eligible—one segment from Divide to Melrose and another from Melrose to Notch Bottom.

The river was still determined to be free flowing. While diversions and modifications exist along the river, irrigation systems return any remaining flow to the river. The rip rap and other development mentioned in many of the comments were already considered with the tentative classification of Recreational. Some adjustments were made to the values for each segment.

#### ***Big Hole River—Divide to Melrose***

The Big Hole River segment from Divide to Melrose contains recreation and fish values that are outstandingly remarkable. While the river is scenic, the criteria states that notable or exemplary features would be present in the landscape elements along the corridor and would not be typical of other rivers in the region. The scenic values along this stretch do not meet this threshold and are not considered outstandingly remarkable.

#### ***Big Hole River—Melrose to Notch Bottom***

The Big Hole River segment from Melrose to Notch Bottom contains recreation, fish, and historic values. After reevaluating the segmentation and boundary, the cultural values described in the Draft Eligibility Report are not within the study corridor. The scenic qualities of the river related to BLM lands along this segment are not outstandingly

remarkable, no features are notable or exemplary, and the visual attractions along the river corridor are common to and typical of other rivers in the region.

#### **Changes to Big Sheep Creek**

The Draft Eligibility Report found Big Sheep Creek free flowing with recreation, fish, scenic, cultural, and ecological values. The river was tentatively classified as Recreational. This classification allows for existing intrusions such as gravel pits, and road and fish improvement projects. One change was made to the river. Big Sheep Creek supports a renowned rainbow and brown trout fishery, supported by large springs that provide year-long flows and high aquatic productivity. Originally these were considered fish values; however, the characteristics described relate more closely to the recreation and ecological values that are considered outstandingly remarkable. Agriculture was not added as a cultural value, as suggested. BLM only reviewed values located on BLM lands within the study corridor against the criteria set for each category.

No change was made to any of the other values, and Big Sheep Creek contains outstandingly remarkable recreation, scenic, cultural, and ecological values.

#### **Changes to Canyon Creek**

The Draft Eligibility Report found Canyon Creek free flowing with outstandingly remarkable geologic values. The river was tentatively classified as Recreational. Canyon Creek is no longer eligible after additional review of the location of geological values identified in the Draft Eligibility Report indicated they are not



located on BLM lands. Thus the Canyon Creek segment on BLM lands will not move forward for further study as a potential addition to the Wild and Scenic River system.

### **Changes to Jones Creek**

The Draft Eligibility Report found Jones Creek free flowing with outstandingly remarkable fish values. The river was tentatively classified as Wild. Original information used in the Draft Eligibility report indicated populations of westslope cutthroat trout in Jones Creek were genetically pure. Coupled with inaccessible habitat and primitive shorelines, the fish value met the eligibility criteria. New information provided by Fish, Wildlife and Parks on the genetic purity of the westslope cutthroat trout in Jones Creek shows the trout are not genetically pure (Clancy and Oswald, personal communication, June 4, 2002). Thus the river does not meet the criteria. As fish were the only identified value within this river, Jones Creek will not move forward for further study as a potential addition to the Wild and Scenic River system.

### **Changes to the Madison River–Cliff Lake to Varney Bridge**

The Draft Eligibility Report found this segment of the Madison to be free flowing with recreation, scenic, geologic, wildlife, and cultural values. The river segment was tentatively classified as Recreational. The cultural values found along this segment are of the historic period and should have been termed historic in the Draft report rather than cultural. Review of this segment resulted in more focus on the particular aspects of

the scenic, wildlife, and cultural values considered outstandingly remarkable in the Draft report, but all of the value categories still remain outstandingly remarkable.

Scenic values considered outstandingly remarkable on this river segment are the Palisades. These towering cliffs are an exemplary feature along this river segment, and are uncommon to other rivers in the geographic region.

Historic values that are outstandingly remarkable are related to the battle between the Blackfeet and early trappers at Ruby Creek.

Wildlife values that are outstandingly remarkable are related to the winter habitat provided for trumpeter swans migrating through this corridor. The BLM lands provide a critical link for this BLM species of special concern. Some of the other wildlife discussed under the wildlife value section of the Draft Eligibility Report are more closely related to the recreation value. The abundance and diversity of wildlife that use BLM lands along the corridor provide viewing opportunities which change throughout the seasons of the year.

### **Changes to the Madison River–Powerhouse to N. Wilderness Boundary**

The Draft Eligibility Report found this segment of the Madison River to be free flowing with recreation and scenic values. The river segment was tentatively classified as Wild. However, the Madison River is listed on the Montana DEQ 303(d) list and an impaired stream



cannot be classified as Wild. The classification on this segment will be changed to Scenic.

**Changes to the Madison River–N. Wilderness Boundary to Greycliff**

The Draft Eligibility Report found this segment of the Madison River to be free flowing with recreation, cultural, and historic values. The river segment was tentatively classified as Recreational. No changes were made on this segment.

**Changes to North Fork of Greenhorn/Dark Hollow Creek**

The Draft Eligibility Report found this river to be free flowing with fish and ecological values. The river was tentatively classified as Wild. This segment was reassessed in relation to water quality, the values it contained, and its tentative classification. Information not previously

considered showed motorized access is authorized for approximately ½ mile along the North Fork of Greenhorn Creek. Additional review showed the westslope cutthroat trout population present in this river is not genetically pure. Therefore, the fish value is not outstandingly remarkable in accordance with the eligibility criteria. In addition, it was determined that while the ecological values along this river are in proper functioning condition and provide an exceptional example on the local level of this habitat type at site potential, the occurrence is not rare or unique on a regional or national level and is not outstandingly remarkable. The river is also on the impaired water body list. Based on this information, the North Fork of Greenhorn/Dark Hollow Creek is not eligible for further consideration under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.



# FINAL DOCUMENTATION OF ELIGIBLE RIVER SEGMENTS

## Bear Creek

Free-Flowing	Outstandingly Remarkable Values								Tentative Classification			Total Segment Length (Miles)	BLM Segment Length (Miles)
	Scenic	Recreation	Geological	Fish	Wildlife	Historic	Cultural	Other Values	Wild	Scenic	Recreational		
YES				X						X		2.27	2.27

### Description of Outstandingly Remarkable Values:

**Fish Values:** Bear Creek contains a native population of genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout, considered a species of special concern by the BLM. The westslope cutthroat trout populations of Bear Creek represent a unique genetic resource which appears to have diverged widely and long ago. The genetic variation of the population renders it a prime candidate as a broodstock source for the Red Rock River drainage and perhaps the Madison River drainage as a result of paleo-geologic connectivity between the two rivers. In combination with the habitat provided along Bear Creek and its inaccessibility due to its location within the Centennial Mountains Wilderness Study Area, the fish value is outstandingly remarkable.

## Beaverhead River

Free-Flowing	Outstandingly Remarkable Values								Tentative Classification			Total Segment Length (Miles)	BLM Segment Length (Miles)
	Scenic	Recreation	Geological	Fish	Wildlife	Historic	Cultural	Other Values	Wild	Scenic	Recreational		
YES		X		X		X					X	3.22	2.95

\*Includes .11 miles—one side only

### Description of Outstandingly Remarkable Values:

**Recreation Values:** The Beaverhead River is considered a "Class 1" (Blue Ribbon) trout fishery by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Visitors travel long distances to fish the Beaverhead River for the resident brown trout and to a lesser degree rainbow trout. Tail-water influences from Clark Canyon Reservoir enhance the overall fish



habitat, resulting in one of the most productive brown trout fisheries in Montana. It provides a significant opportunity regionally and nationally for outfitters and guides, as well as individual sport fishermen.

**Fish Values:** The Beaverhead River is one of the most productive brown trout fisheries in Montana. Overall habitat quality is enhanced by the tail-water influences from Clark Canyon Reservoir, providing exceptional habitat.

**Historic Values:** There are two important historic properties recorded along this river segment. They are both considered outstandingly remarkable.

The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail follows the Beaverhead River through the entirety of this section. This area is mentioned specifically in the journals of Lewis and Clark as "Sarvisberry Valley," and indicates that William Clark and company camped overnight at the mouth of Gallagher Creek on the night of August 15, 1805. Specific mention is made of the difficulty the men had pulling the canoes through the willows and over shallow and cold waters. The river segment is therefore an important element of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail with demonstrated national, regional, and local significance. This segment of the Beaverhead River is associated with a significant national event (the exploration of the west by the Corps of Discovery) and is associated with important persons on a national scale (William Clark and Meriwether Lewis).

The Ney Ranch is also located adjacent to the Beaverhead River in this segment. The Ney Ranch was homesteaded in 1882 by William F. Henneberry, the son of an early pioneer of Beaverhead County. When the homestead papers were filed, improvements identified a log cabin, stables, irrigation ditches, and irrigated fields. Irrigation water rights were filed by William F. Henneberry on September 15, 1882 for 180 inches of water out of the Beaverhead River (Case No. 828). The original homestead cabin is still standing at the location along with a later log house that was constructed at the turn of the century. The Ney Ranch is an excellent example of early homesteading in southwestern Montana and is considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The property is linked to the Beaverhead River by its proximity and use of the river for irrigation. On a local level, the site is associated with an important local person (William F. Henneberry, an early pioneer of Beaverhead County). On a regional scale, the Ney Ranch is associated with important events that resulted in the settlement of southwest Montana and the west (early homesteading and ranching). While there are many examples of homesteads and homesteading was not a rare or unusual activity, the Ney Ranch is located on public lands, which is unusual given that homesteading was an activity that resulted in the transfer of public land into private ownership. In addition, an archived record of artifacts and historical records exists for this particular site. The existence of the physical remains associated with an archived record gives this site regional significance. The Ney Ranch is more than locally significant and is considered outstandingly remarkable.



### Big Hole River–Divide to Melrose

Free-Flowing	Outstandingly Remarkable Values								Tentative Classification			Total Segment Length (Miles)	BLM Segment Length (Miles)  *Includes .80 miles—one side only
	Scenic	Recreation	Geological	Fish	Wildlife	Historic	Cultural	Other Values	Wild	Scenic	Recreational		
YES		X		X							X	13.40	5.27

### Description of Outstandingly Remarkable Values:

**Recreation Values:** This segment of the Big Hole River provides recreation opportunities for local, regional, and out-of-state users. Classified a "Class 1" (Blue Ribbon) trout fishery by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the Big Hole River has resident rainbow and brown trout populations that are regionally and internationally significant. People travel long distances to fish the waters of the Big Hole River. This segment is also noted for floating and has exceptional opportunities for hiking, sightseeing, wildlife viewing, and photography. Deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and eagles frequent the area and visitors are willing to travel long distances to see them.

**Fish Values:** The Big Hole River contains the only known existing population of fluvial (river dwelling) arctic grayling in the lower 48 United States. The grayling occupy the Big Hole River from about the town of Jackson, Montana to the mouth of the Big Hole River. The Big Hole River grayling are genetically different from other grayling populations in Montana, Canada, and Alaska. Although populations decrease in the lower reaches of the river, the presence of this unique population meets the criteria as an outstandingly remarkable value.

### Big Hole River–Melrose to Notch Bottom

Free-Flowing	Outstandingly Remarkable Values								Tentative Classification			Total Segment Length (Miles)	BLM Segment Length (Miles)  *Includes .97 miles—one side only
	Scenic	Recreation	Geological	Fish	Wildlife	Historic	Cultural	Other Values	Wild	Scenic	Recreational		
YES		X		X		X					X	20.01	4.27



## Description of Outstandingly Remarkable Values:

**Recreation Values:** This segment of the Big Hole River provides recreation opportunities for local, regional, and out-of-state users. Classified a "Class 1" (Blue Ribbon) trout fishery by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the Big Hole River has resident rainbow and brown trout populations that are regionally and internationally renowned. People travel long distances to fish the waters of the Big Hole River. This segment tends to receive less floating activity than the segment from Divide to Melrose, but still provides exceptional recreation opportunities, especially for fishing.

**Fish Values:** The Big Hole River contains the only known existing population of fluvial (river dwelling) arctic grayling in the lower 48 United States. The grayling occupy the Big Hole River from about the town of Jackson, Montana to the mouth of the Big Hole River. The Big Hole River grayling are genetically different from other grayling populations in Montana, Canada, and Alaska. Although populations decrease in the lower reaches of the river, the presence of this unique population meets the criteria as an outstandingly remarkable value.

**Historic Values:** On August 5, 1805, Meriwether Lewis and a companion traversed up the Big Hole River to the Notch Bottom and climbed up the prominent feature now called the Hogback. From this vantage point they could see the confluence of what is now the Big Hole, Ruby, and Beaverhead Rivers which combine to form the Jefferson River and also view the numerous distant mountain ranges. It was from this vantage point that the decision to follow the Beaverhead River rather than the Big Hole River was validated. This event and prominent land form are clearly described in the journals of Lewis and Clark. The area is an important element of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. The trail itself has national and regional significance, and the significance of the event that occurred at what is known as Lewis' Lookout as well as the association with important persons well known on a national level meets the criteria of outstandingly remarkable.

### Big Sheep Creek

Free-Flowing	Outstandingly Remarkable Values								Tentative Classification			Total Segment Length (Miles)	BLM Segment Length (Miles)
	Scenic	Recreation	Geological	Fish	Wildlife	Historic	Cultural	Other Values	Wild	Scenic	Recreational		
YES	X	X					X	X			X	15.47	8.62



## **Description of Outstandingly Remarkable Values:**

**Recreation Values:** The recreational opportunities along this segment of river include fishing, hiking, camping, sightseeing, and wildlife viewing. All of these attributes were recognized for their outstanding quality when the Big Sheep Creek/Medicine Lodge Back County Byway was designated in 1990. Big Sheep Creek provides a diverse habitat for a unique collection of wildlife, raptors, waterfowl, and passerine birds, resulting in exceptional bird-watching. Bighorn sheep have been regularly seen throughout Big Sheep Creek canyon during all seasons and was one of the primary reasons for the byway designation. The area serves as a migration corridor and provides winter habitat for elk, moose, and deer. Mountain goats are occasionally seen. Big Sheep Creek is classified as a "Class 2-3" fishery by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, but is a nationally recognized recreational fishery for brown, and to a lesser extent rainbow trout.

**Scenic Values:** Big Sheep Creek winds through a series of three narrow canyons that imparts the feeling of entering a deep, well-vegetated, confined canyon between steep mountain slopes, then entering a narrow "tunnel" between cliffs and passing into a more open expanding valley, and finally opening onto mountain vistas. The lower canyon is confined by steep rubble and scree slopes that extend over 2500 feet from the stream to the top of Dixon Mountain and White Pine Ridge. Different slope aspects support a wide variety of conifer and shrub communities on geologic warps and folds typical of the Overthrust Belt. Subtly different colors of soils and rocks combine with vegetation colors and patterns to create a new view around every corner that is enhanced by the daily shifting of shadows. Winter snow cover imparts an additional beauty to these slope and vegetation patterns. The stream corridor in the lower canyon is densely vegetated with willows, cottonwood, dogwood, and conifers, often obscuring the stream itself. Fall foliage is spectacular. The second canyon is very narrowly confined between limestone cliffs 50-200 feet high. These cliffs are pocked with small caves and holes. Large springs emerge into the spring channel in this area that add crystal clear water to Big Sheep Creek. In the spring, small meadows along the stream and springs are filled with the yellows, blues, and whites of wild flowers. The upper canyon is a combination of the two lower canyons, combining the extensive, steep, rocky slopes with limestone outcrops and cliffs, and an abundance of caves, holes, crevices, and unique geologic folds and fractures, with larger meadows bordering in the stream. This upper canyon opens to the west onto the spectacular views of the Continental Divide peaks in Big Sheep Creek Basin, and looks back to the equally impressive Lima Peaks in the east. The combination of all these elements is not common to other rivers in the geographic region and result in an outstandingly remarkable scenic value.

**Cultural Values:** There are numerous prehistoric archaeological sites located along Big Sheep Creek. These include tipi ring sites, wickiup sites, pictograph sites, and lithic scatters. Most, if not all of these properties are considered significant for their scientific values. Site 24BE601 (Big Sheep Creek Wickiup) was formally listed on the National



Register of Historic Places. Many of the pictograph sites hold special religious significance for modern Native American Tribes. Due to the arid nature and topography of the Big Sheep Creek Canyon and proximity of the prehistoric sites, the river was utilized as a primary source of water during the occupation of the prehistoric sites and also served as an important transportation route for traveling through the region. The cultural values identified have regional and national importance for interpreting prehistory. In addition, the standing wickiups features are considered rare and unusual in the region, and pictograph sites are also rare in the region and are generally viewed by Native American groups as having been utilized for sacred purposes.

**Ecological Values:** Steep canyon walls, porous limestone cliffs and outcrops, extensive talus slopes on all slope aspects, and a wide range of grass, shrub, and tree communities provide a combination of unique elements resulting in a highly diverse ecological setting. Combined with large springs which provide year-long flows to Big Sheep Creek, the corridor provides a high level of biodiversity in a relatively confined area. This combination of values is uncommon and does not occur on other BLM lands in the region.

#### Madison River–Cliff Lake to Varney Bridge

Free-Flowing	Outstandingly Remarkable Values								Tentative Classification			Total Segment Length (Miles)	BLM Segment Length (Miles)
	Scenic	Recreation	Geological	Fish	Wildlife	Historic	Cultural	Other Values	Wild	Scenic	Recreational		
YES	X	X	X		X	X					X	33.57	13.33

#### Description of Outstandingly Remarkable Values:

**Recreation Values:** This segment includes a nationally and internationally known blue ribbon trout fishery. It is heavily used by outfitters and guides, as well as individual fishermen. The numbers and mixture of wildlife species draw people on a regional scale to partake of wildlife and bird viewing opportunities. Numerous waterfowl are sustained during the winter by open water along the river. Waterfowl nesting occurs throughout the river corridor. Increasing numbers of non-breeding white pelicans are using the Madison River as summer habitat, and at least five active bald eagle breeding territories are present on this reach of the Madison River. Substantial numbers of bald eagles winter on the Madison River, with numbers fluctuating on this reach depending on ice cover and the availability of fish and waterfowl as prey. In addition, the Wall Creek Game Range



immediately adjoins the Madison River and supports several thousand elk during the winter. With an increasing elk population, use has expanded to both sides of the Madison River on public land. Significant numbers of mule deer and antelope also utilize winter and spring habitat adjoining the river. Moose are found throughout the upper river corridor during most of the year. A variety of fur bearers are also found on the river including beaver, muskrat, mink, and river otter. The number and variety of species in combination with the river setting provide recreational opportunities related to wildlife viewing that is not common along other rivers in the region.

**Scenic Values:** The Madison River Valley is widely known for its panoramic views of distant mountain peaks, obtrusive granite bluffs, and broad valley vistas. The area known as “the Palisades” located on BLM lands along the west bank of the river study area contains towering cliffs that comprise a unique and exemplary visual feature uncommon to other rivers in the region.

**Geologic Values:** Embedded in the scenic grandeur of the Madison River Valley is a unique record of past geologic events and geomorphological processes expressed in well developed fluvial terrace sequences and exceptionally well formed alluvial fans. These land forms document important climatic and tectonic events that have created the landscape that we see today, and also serve as a field classroom for countless students of earth sciences.

**Wildlife Values:** The Madison Valley provides a significant migration corridor for literally millions of waterfowl, raptors, and passerine birds (songbirds). Although use occurs during all seasons, the river corridor provides crucial habitat for migration during adverse conditions when adjoining high-elevation routes are unavailable. Of particular significance is the use of this segment of the Madison River by trumpeter swans. This use has increased since the winter feeding program was discontinued on Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. As a result, BLM lands along the corridor provide regional winter habitat for the trumpeter swans as they migrate. Because the trumpeter swan is a species of special concern, generates high national interest, and the corridor provides a critical link for its migration, this value is considered outstandingly remarkable.

**Historic Values:** While the river corridor contains numerous historic and prehistoric cultural properties and served as a travel corridor in prehistoric and historic times, the value that meets the criteria of outstandingly remarkable is a well documented confrontation/battle between the Blackfeet and early trappers that took place at the mouth of Ruby Creek. Notable participants included Jim Bridger, Osborne Russell, and Kit Carson, and the battle is described in the memoirs of all three men. The association of this event with these prominent figures of western expansion and settlement as well as the placement of the value on the landscape within the river corridor make this value outstandingly remarkable.



### Madison River–Powerhouse to N. Wilderness Boundary

Free-Flowing	Outstandingly Remarkable Values								Tentative Classification			Total Segment Length (Miles)	BLM Segment Length (Miles)
	Scenic	Recreation	Geological	Fish	Wildlife	Historic	Cultural	Other Values	Wild	Scenic	Recreational		
YES	X	X								X		7.67	7.67

### Description of Outstandingly Remarkable Values:

**Recreation Values:** This portion of the river is known nationally for its scenery and as a blue ribbon trout fishery. It is famous for white water boating opportunities. Wildlife viewing includes opportunities to see bald eagles, black bear, moose, and mountain goats. This segment bisects the first BLM-administered wilderness area, designated in 1983. Outfitters offer trips for fishing, floating, and wildlife viewing. It contains one class IV rapid and a series of class II and III features. It attracts national attention and is accessible only by foot, horseback, or water craft and offers outstanding opportunities for solitude.

**Scenic Values:** This segment of river runs through the steep, narrow Bear Trap Canyon and features granite walls that reach as high as 1,500 feet. Elusive light sources showcase unique geologic features throughout the canyon. The seasonal colors of chokecherry bushes, mahogany, willow, and rosebushes line the banks. A beautiful sense of solitude is captured at each quiet bend. The area is rated "A" for visual quality as defined in the BLM Visual Resource Inventory Handbook, H-8410-1.

### Madison River–N. Wilderness Boundary to Greycliff

Free-Flowing	Outstandingly Remarkable Values								Tentative Classification			Total Segment Length (Miles)	BLM Segment Length (Miles)
	Scenic	Recreation	Geological	Fish	Wildlife	Historic	Cultural	Other Values	Wild	Scenic	Recreational		
YES		X				X	X				X	11.06	5.87

### Description of Outstandingly Remarkable Values:

**Recreation Values:** This segment of the Madison River is used primarily by local



residents; however, the blue ribbon trout fishery is nationally if not internationally famous, and some people travel great distances to fish on the Madison River as a whole. Outfitters frequent this stretch of river in the early fishing season during the salmon, caddis fly, and mayfly hatch. It is popular with floating recreationists due to the calm, relatively warm water created by the Ennis Dam. This segment provides a variety of recreation opportunities for local, regional, and out-of-state users and recently attracted participants from all over the world to retrace the Bozeman Trail in covered wagons and period dress.

**Cultural Values:** The segment of the Madison River from the northern wilderness boundary to Black's Ford contains a significant prehistoric archaeological district. The prehistoric properties range in age from 500 to 10,000 years old and include stone circle (tipi ring) habitation sites, lithic scatters, and locations for the procurement of food and raw materials for tool manufacture. This area exhibits the highest average density of prehistoric sites in the Field Office area and also includes the site with the largest number of individual stone circles in southwest Montana (24MA304). These prehistoric sites contain significant research and scientific value and are rare and unique when compared to other areas because of the high site density and number of stone circles present. The sites are river related because the lower Madison River canyon was an important winter habitation location and an important transportation corridor.

**Historic Values:** Historic values along this river segment include historic trails, bridges, and homesteads. The historic Bozeman Trail extending from Ft. Laramie to Virginia City and the gold fields of southwestern Montana crossed the Madison River and Black's Ford and passed along the canyon to Warms Springs Creek. The Bozeman Trail was developed by John Bozeman (an important historical figure in Montana History) in 1863-64 and was a well used shortcut along the Oregon Trail to the Montana gold fields. The flood of immigrants and settlers using the Bozeman Trail was the primary cause of the Great Sioux Wars of the late 1860's. The Scanlon Toll Bridge across the Madison River was one of the first toll bridges authorized by the Territorial Legislature and signed by Governor Meagher on December 12, 1866. Remnants of the bridge are still evident in the Madison River as well as foundations of the associated buildings. The lower Madison River Canyon served (and continues to serve) as an important transportation corridor historically and prehistorically. The historical values represent significant events (early settlement and development of southwestern Montana, first toll bridge authorized by the Territorial Legislature), are associated with important individuals (John Bozeman), and are determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (Bozeman Trail, Scanlon Toll Bridge). The values are outstandingly remarkable on a regional scale.



## CONCLUSIONS

Eight (8) rivers or river segments are eligible for further study in the Dillon Field Office Resource Management Planning process. These rivers include Bear

Creek, the Beaverhead River, two segments of the Big Hole River, Big Sheep Creek, and three segments of the Madison River.



## REFERENCES CITED

BLM 2002

Draft Wild and Scenic Rivers Eligibility Report. March 2002. Manuscript on file, Bureau of Land Management, Dillon Field Office, Dillon, Montana.

Clancy, Pat and Dick Oswald

Personal Communication on genetic purity of westslope cutthroat trout. June 4, 2002.



**TABLE 1.**  
**Eligible Rivers within the Dillon Field Office Planning Area**

River Name	River Segment	Outstandingly Remarkable Values								Tentative Classification			Total Segment Length (Miles)*	BLM Segment Length (Miles)*
		Scenic	Recreation	Geological	Fish	Wildlife	Historic	Cultural	Other Values	Wild	Scenic	Recreational		
Bear Creek	Beginning at the headwaters of Bear Creek in the SW¼ of Section 8, T.15S, R.3W near the Continental Divide and ending where the river leaves the Centennial Wilderness Study Area in the SW¼ of Section 32, T.14S, R.3W.				X						X		2.27	2.27
Beaverhead River	Beginning at the I-15 bridge in the SW¼ of Section 11, T.9S, R.10W and ending where the river leaves BLM lands near Dalys exit in the NW¼ of Section 1, T.9S, R.10W.		X		X		X					X	3.22	2.95
Big Hole River--Divide to Melrose	Beginning at the Hwy 43 bridge near Divide in the NE¼ of Section 13, T.1S, R.9W and ending at the Melrose Bridge in the NW¼ of Section 35, T.2S, R.9W.		X		X							X	13.40	5.27
Big Hole River--Melrose to Notch Bottom	Beginning at the Melrose Bridge in the NW¼ of Section 35, T.2S, R.9W, and ending where the river leaves BLM land at the Notch Bottom in the NW¼ of Section 2, T.5S, R.8W.		X		X		X					X	20.01	4.27
Big Sheep Creek	Beginning in the SE¼ of Section 4, T.15S, R.10W, at the confluence with Rock Creek and ending at the mouth of the canyon in the NW¼ of Section 20, T.13S, R.9W.	X	X					X	X			X	15.47	8.62
Madison River--Cliff Lake to Varney Bridge	Beginning at the bridge in the SW¼ of Section 32, T.11S, R.2E near old townsite of Cliff Lake and ending at Varney Bridge in the SW¼ of Section 8, T.7S, R.1W.	X	X	X		X	X					X	33.57	13.33
Madison River--Powerhouse to N. Wilderness Boundary	Beginning where river enters Bear Trap Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness in the NW¼ of Section 17, T.4S, R.1E and ending where river leaves Bear Trap Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness boundary in the SW¼ of Section 10, T.3 S, R.1E.	X	X								X		7.67	7.67
Madison River--N. Wilderness Boundary to Greycliff	Beginning where river leaves the Bear Trap Unit of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness in the SW¼ of Section 10, T.3S, R.1E, and ending where river leaves public land at Greycliff in the NE¼ of Section 6, T.2S, R.2E.		X				X	X				X	11.06	5.87

\*All lengths were measured from a 1:24,000 topographic map using a hand planimeter.







# Locations of Rivers Within Planning Area

## MAPS

Map 1

This map is intended to show the general location of the river network within the planning area. The map is not intended to show the exact location of the river network. The map is not intended to show the exact location of the river network.

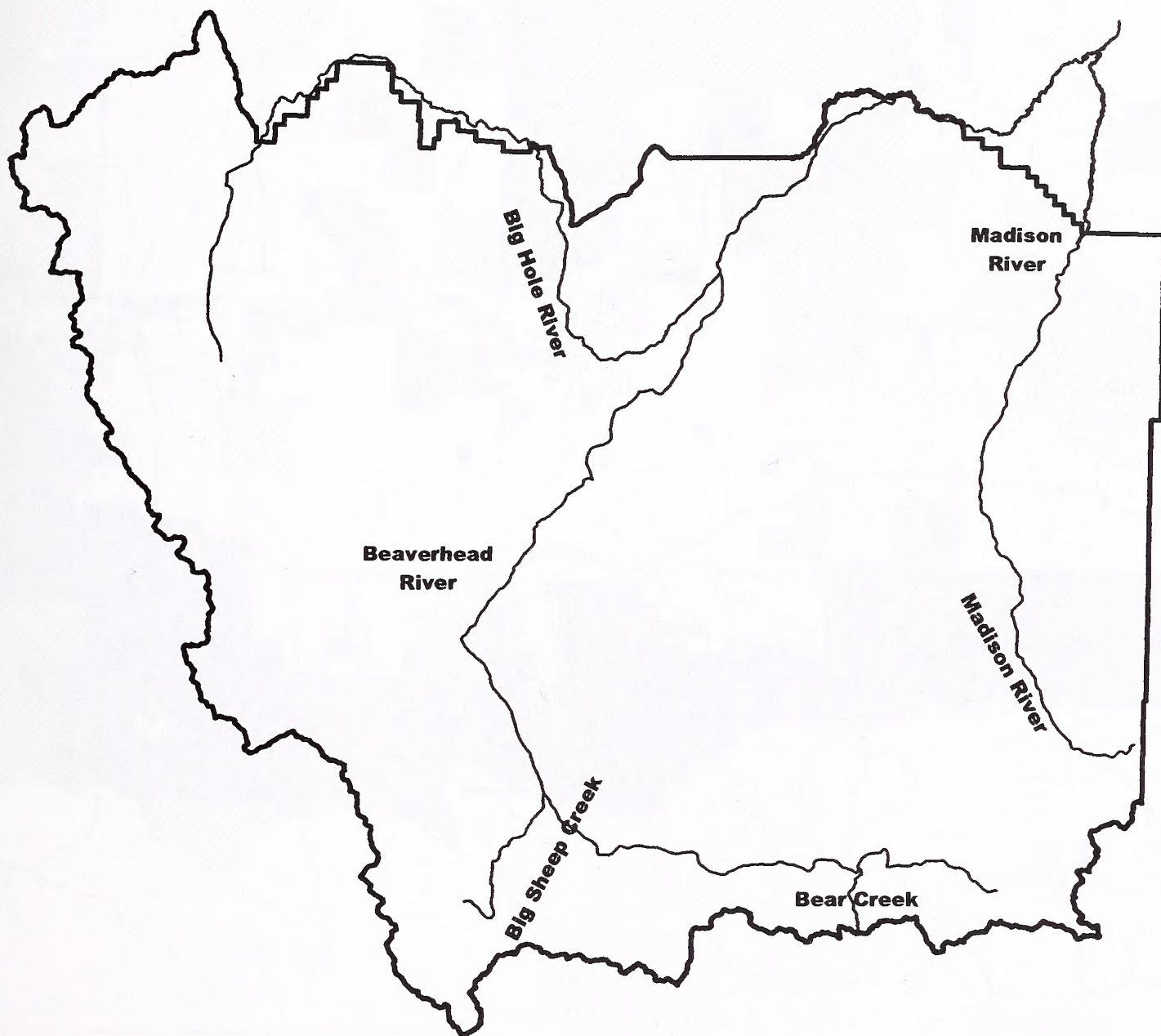






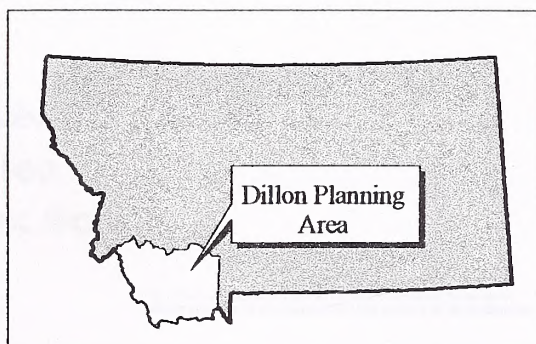


# Locations of Rivers Within Planning Area



## Map 1

This map is meant to show general location of study rivers within the planning area. Eligible segments are shown in more detail on maps 2 through 9.

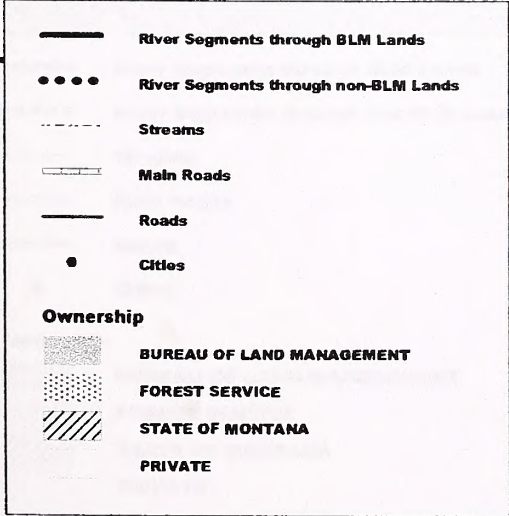
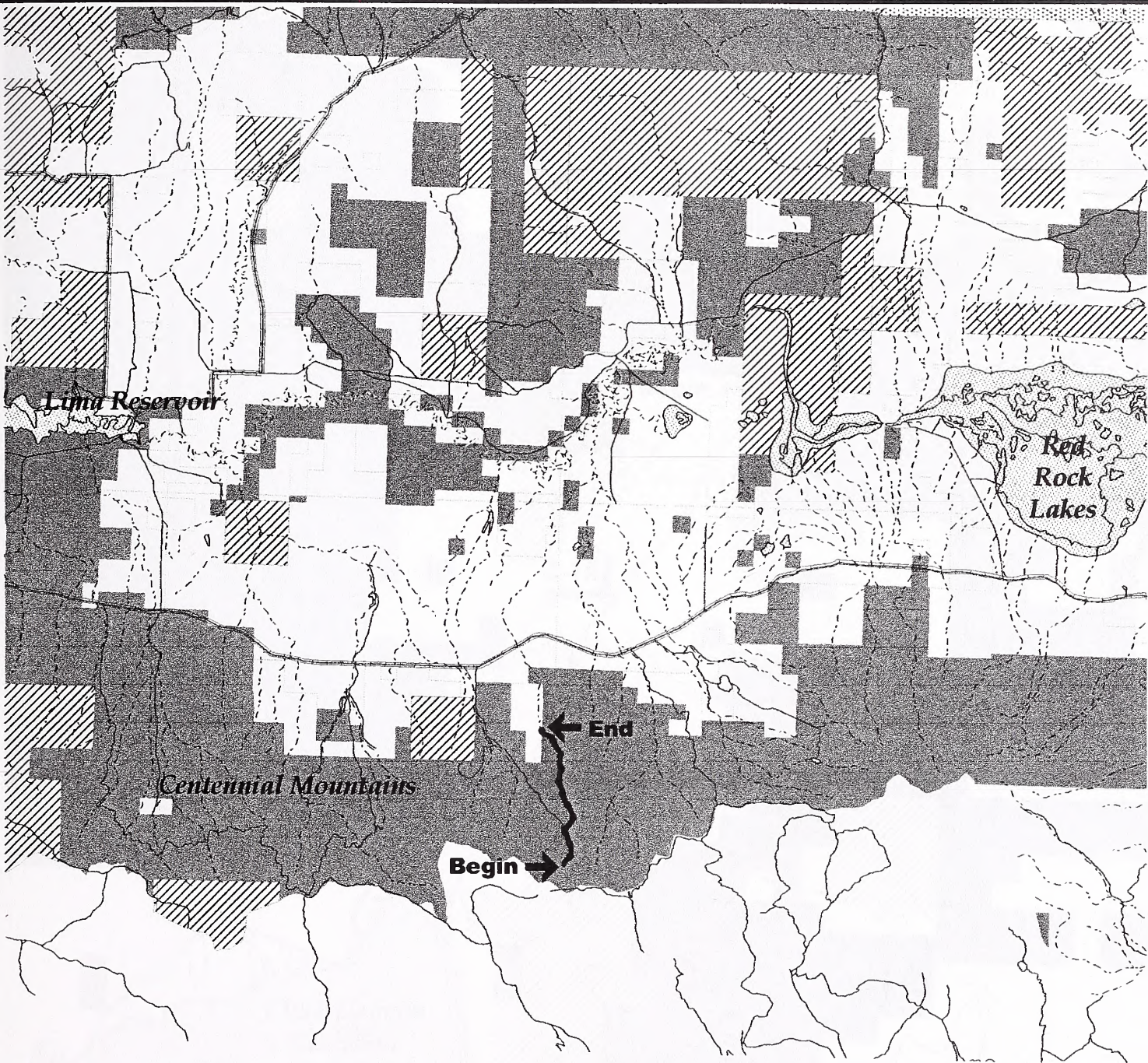








# Bear Creek



**Map 2**  
**Bear Creek**  
**Total Distance: 2.27 Miles**  
**BLM: 2.27 Miles**  
**Classification: Scenic**

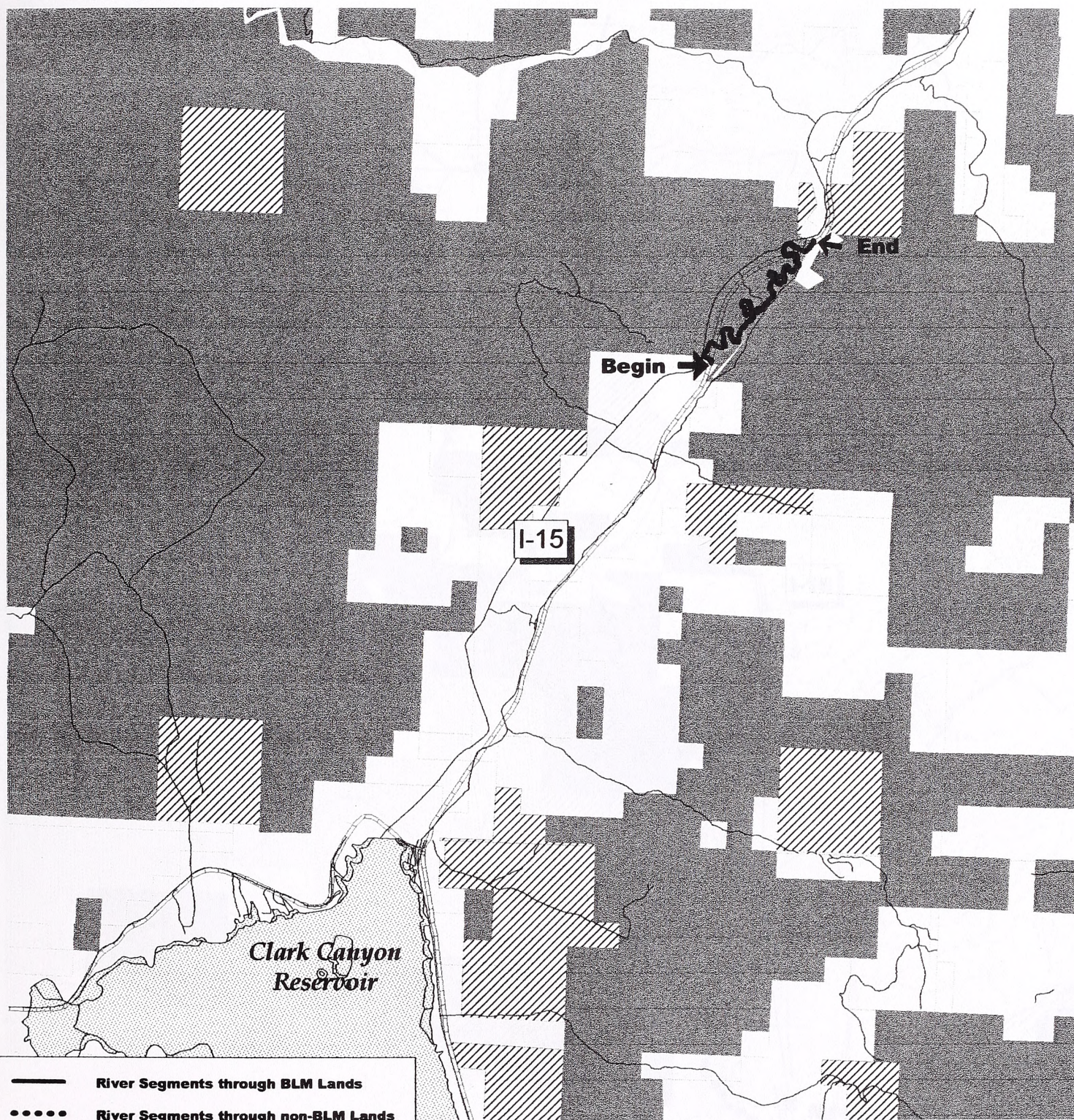
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# Beaverhead River



- River Segments through BLM Lands
  - River Segments through non-BLM Lands
  - Streams
  - Main Roads
  - Roads
  - Cities
- Ownership**
- BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
  - FOREST SERVICE
  - STATE OF MONTANA
  - PRIVATE

## Map 3

**Beaverhead River (Pipe Organ to Dalys)**

**Total Distance: 3.22 Miles**

**BLM: 2.95 Miles (Includes .11 miles one side only)**

**Classification: Recreational**

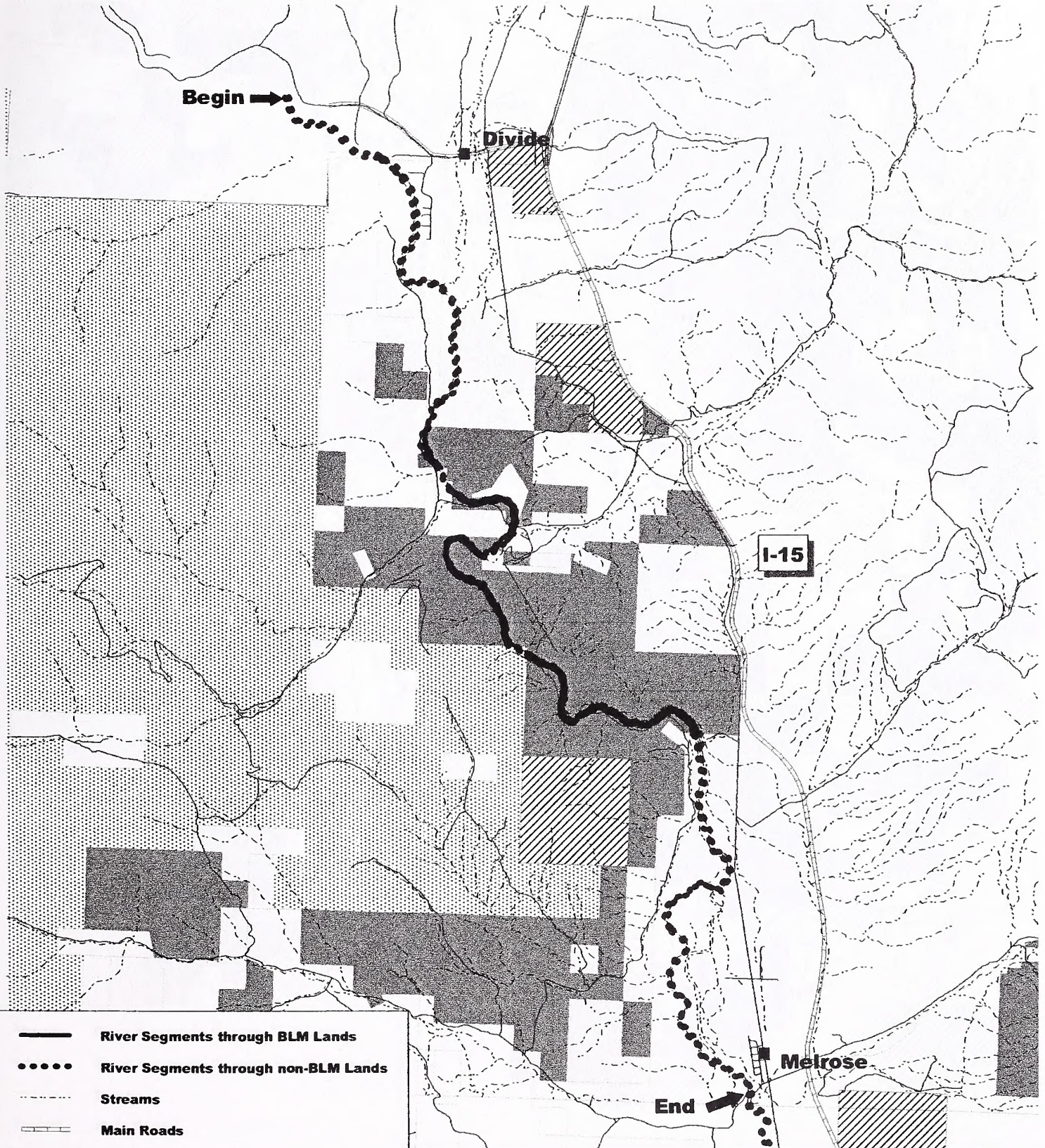
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# Big Hole River - Divide to Melrose



- River Segments through BLM Lands
- ..... River Segments through non-BLM Lands
- - - - - Streams
- ==== Main Roads
- Roads
- Cities

## Ownership

- BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
- FOREST SERVICE
- STATE OF MONTANA
- PRIVATE

## Map 4

### Big Hole River - Divide to Melrose

**Total Distance: 13.40 Miles**

**BLM: 5.27 Miles (Includes .8 miles one side only)**

**Classification: Recreational**

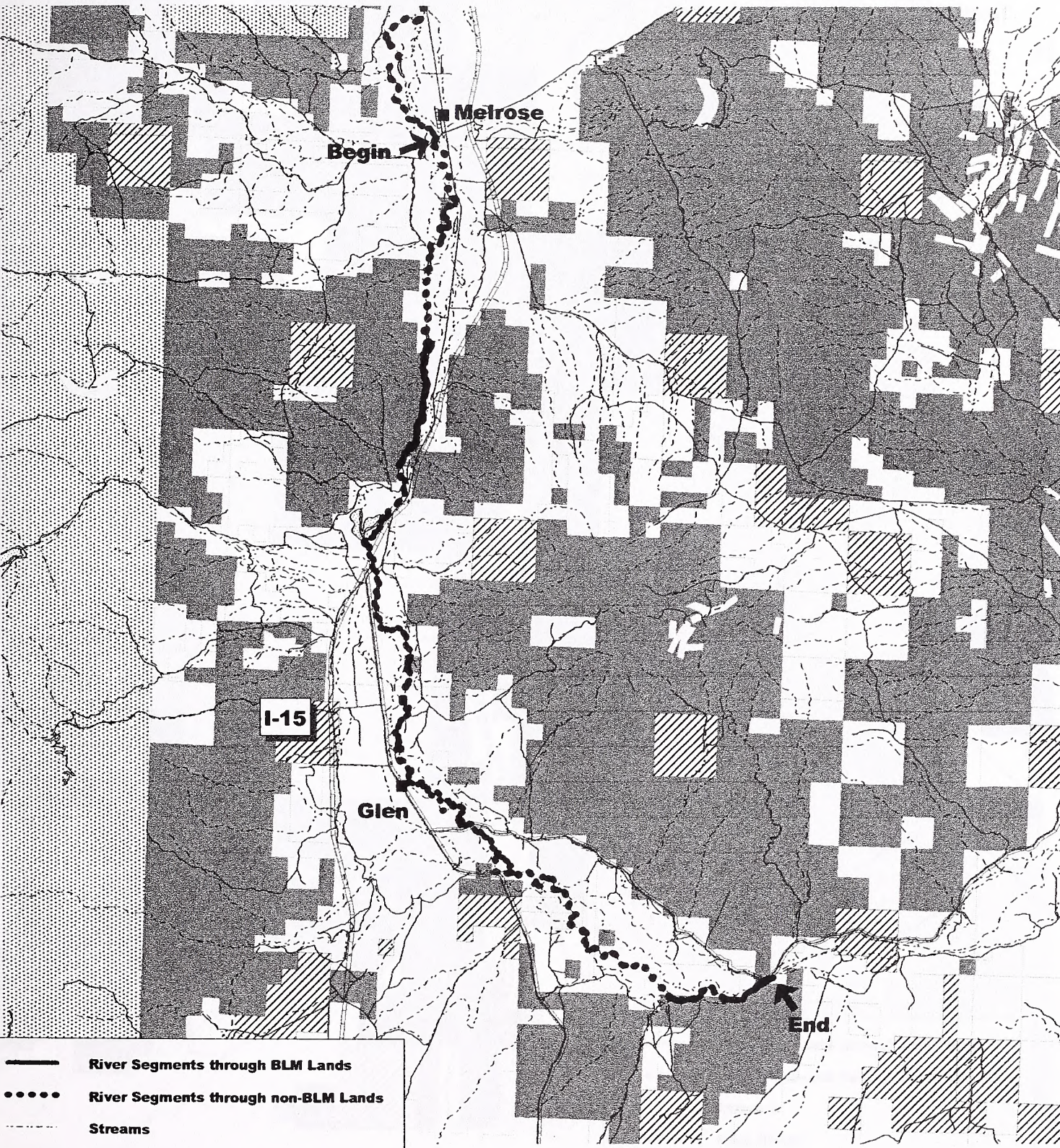
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# Big Hole River - Melrose to Notch Bottom



**Map 5**

**Big Hole River - Melrose to Notch Bottom**

**Total Distance: 20.01 Miles**

**BLM: 4.27 Miles (Includes .97 miles one side only)**

**Classification: Recreational**

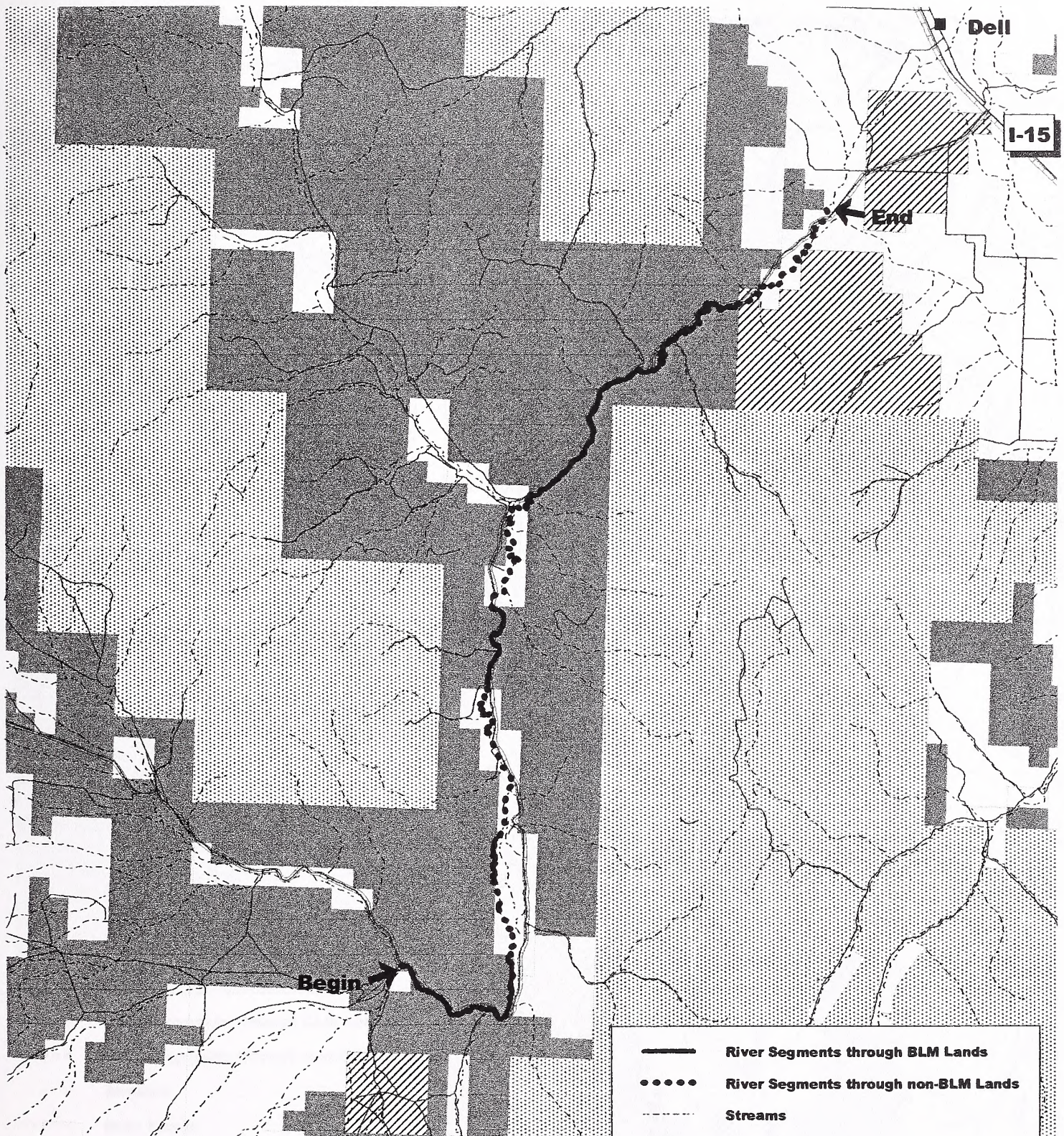
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# Big Sheep Creek



## Map 6

### Big Sheep Creek

**Total Distance: 15.47 Miles**

**BLM: 8.62 Miles**

**Classification: Recreational**

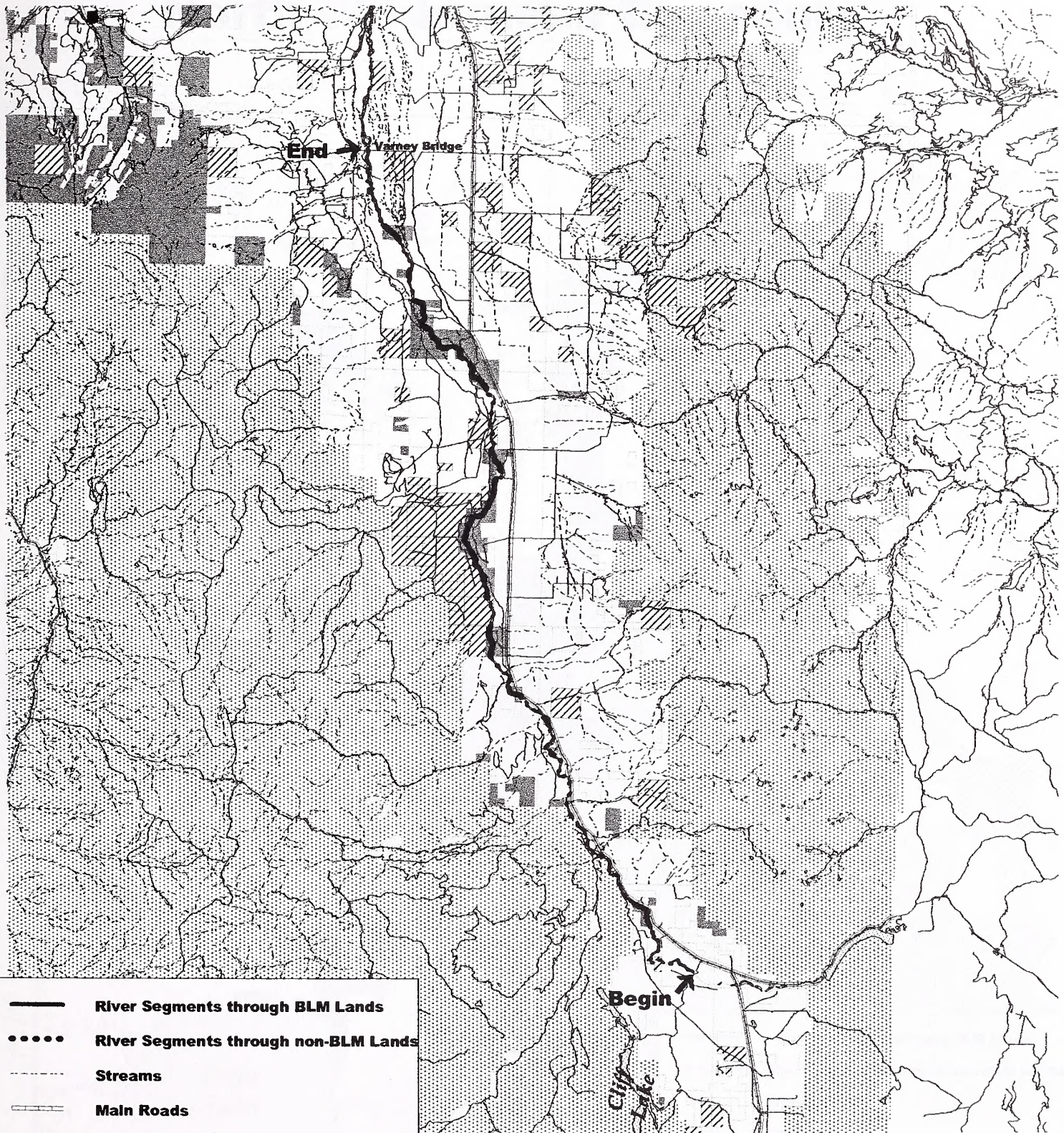
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# Madison River - Cliff Lake to Varney Bridge



-  River Segments through BLM Lands
-  River Segments through non-BLM Lands
-  Streams
-  Main Roads
-  Roads
-  Cities

## Ownership

-  BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
-  FOREST SERVICE
-  STATE OF MONTANA
-  PRIVATE

## Map 7

### Madison River - Cliff Lake to Varney Bridge

**Total Distance: 35.57 Miles**

**BLM: 13.33 Miles**

**Classification: Recreational**

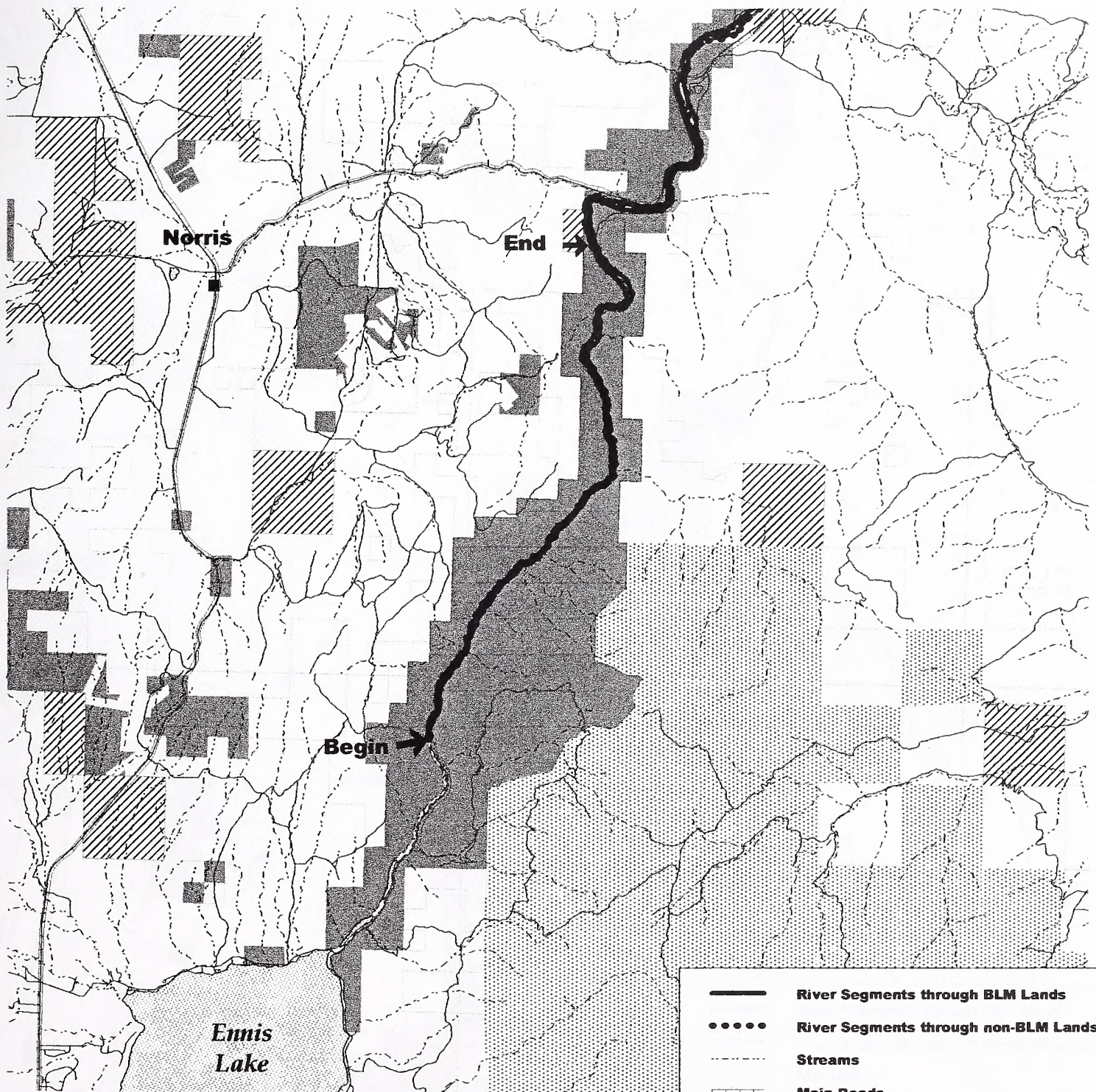
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# Madison River - Powerhouse to North Wilderness Boundary



- River Segments through BLM Lands
  - River Segments through non-BLM Lands
  - Streams
  - Main Roads
  - Roads
  - Cities
- Ownership**
- BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
  - FOREST SERVICE
  - STATE OF MONTANA
  - PRIVATE

**Map 8**  
**Madison River - Powerhouse to North Wilderness Boundary**  
**Total Distance: 7.67 Miles**  
**BLM: 7.67 Miles**  
**Classification: Scenic**

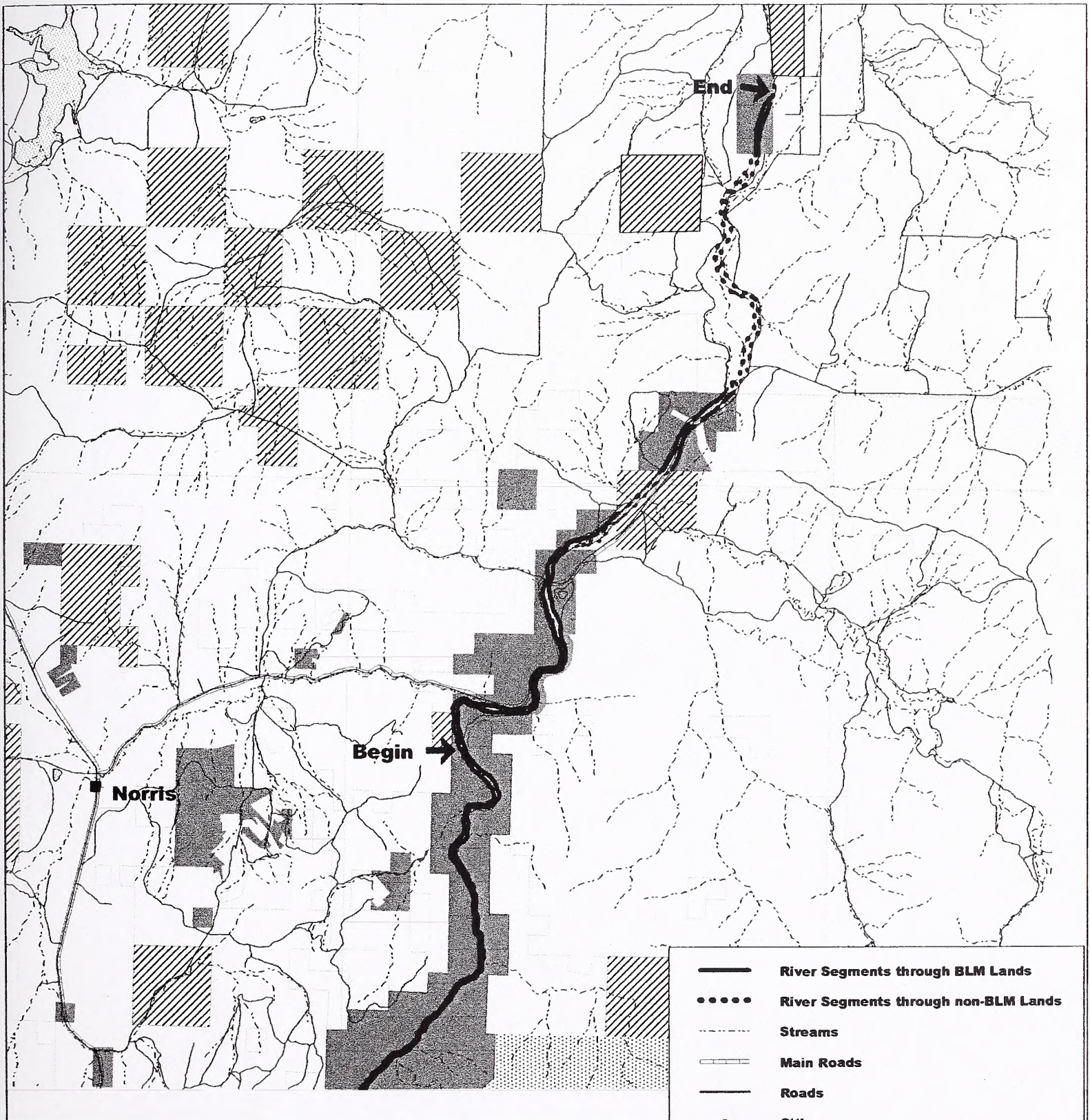






# Madison River

## North Wilderness Boundary to Greycliff



**Map 9**  
**Madison River - North Wilderness Boundary**  
**to Greycliff**  
**Total Distance: 11.06 Miles**  
**BLM: 5.87 Miles (Includes 1.67 miles one side only)**  
**Classification: Recreational**

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management for use of the data for purposes not intended by BLM. Map intended for display purposes only.

- River Segments through BLM Lands
  - River Segments through non-BLM Lands
  - Streams
  - Main Roads
  - Roads
  - Cities
- Ownership**
- BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
  - FOREST SERVICE
  - STATE OF MONTANA
  - PRIVATE











